

News from

Congressman Christopher Carney

Representing Northeast and Central Pennsylvania

For release: February 27, 2008

Contact: Rebecca Gale, 202 225 3731

Rebecca.Gale@mail.house.gov

CARNEY STATEMENT FOR HOMELAND SECURITY HEARING

Washington, D.C.--Congressman Christopher P. Carney, Chairman of the House Homeland Security Subcommittee on Management, Investigations and Oversight, issued the following opening statement for the Subcommittee hearing, "Project 28: Lessons Learned and the Future of SBInet":

"Before I get down to business, I'd like to state my disappointment with DHS for getting their testimony to us so late in the day yesterday. I understand there was some confusion over at DHS about witnesses, but there's still no excuse for the testimony being so late.

"That said, I'd like to thank Chairwoman Sanchez as our respective subcommittee staff has jointly investigated Project 28. I look forward to our continued work on this issue.

"P28 and the larger SBInet program are supposed to be a model of how the federal government is leveraging technology to secure our borders, but Project 28, in my mind, has achieved a dubious distinction as a trifecta of bad government contracting: 1) poor contract management, 2) poor contractor performance, and 3) a poor final product.

"I know some of our witnesses have testified before one or both of these subcommittees in the past and I appreciate your willingness to return.

"Some would say you are true gluttons for punishment, but I am thankful for your continued cooperation as we continue to examine where mistakes were made and what can be done to prevent them from being made again. As the future pieces of SBInet are developed and ultimately put into use, we must remember the hard-learned lessons of P28.

"I'm still wondering why Secretary Chertoff allowed the Department to take final acceptance of P28 last week. From everything I've heard over the last several weeks, while P28 could be headed in the right direction, it's far from acceptable.

"Yet while the Department is finally acknowledging P28's problems when they've briefed me in private, I'm disappointed that their public statements are still so disconnected with reality.

"Over the weekend, I expressed my concerns about P28's acceptance. A DHS spokeswoman responded by attacking me and clinging to the fantasy that all is well with P28, saying "Those

who choose to criticize without seeing the technology firsthand are merely bystanders of the product and have no idea how hard our border patrol is working to keep America safe. We would not have accepted it if it didn't work."

"First, I've seen P28 in person and walked along the Sasabe border. Second, I know how hard the Border Patrol is working to keep America safe, and not just because of the time I spent with them last month. Third, no less an authority than acting Deputy Secretary Schneider has quite candidly told me that P28 doesn't do what DHS expected that it would.

"The Department's press flaks may want to do a little research, both about which Members have been to P28 and what their bosses think of the project itself, before making such ignorant statements.

"When I was in the Tucson sector, sitting in the ops center and watching the COP with the Border Patrol, P28 simply wasn't working as promised. That was about seven months past the actual due date. Now we're nine months past due.

"I'm glad that Boeing has decided to spend their own money to try to iron out some of the myriad problems the system has experienced, but I'm still not convinced we've gotten what we were supposed to get. Maybe, as DHS likes to say, my expectations weren't managed well enough, and I suppose that's not Boeing's fault or responsibility.

"But had P28 been developed in an ideal world, Boeing wouldn't have played such a large role writing their own contract specs, Border Patrol would have had input in the design of the system, and DHS wouldn't have accepted the system until it worked to the Border Patrol's liking.

"I appreciate the forthrightness that I have heard from Acting Deputy Secretary Schneider and Mr. Krone over the last few weeks and I hope and expect we'll see the same candor during our questioning this morning.

"Also, I'd like to give you all a heads up that Chairman Thompson has directed us to keep close tabs on *SBI*net, so you can expect to hear from us again very soon.

"Thank you again for appearing before us today."

###